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SUBJECT: (U) ARF ADVANCES DISASTER RELIEF INITIATIVES AT ANNUAL
RELIEF CONFERENCE, SEPT 16-18

REF: STATE 86139

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SUMMARY

¶1. (U) The ASEAN Regional Forum's (ARF) 27 members, along with other international representatives, advanced a number of proposals for disaster relief cooperation at the annual ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM-DR) in Honolulu, Hawaii, September 16-18. Working in small discussion groups, ARF advanced these initiatives which were designed to increase the interoperability of ARF civilian and military agencies for major, multinational relief operations. Focus areas included developing a common text for temporary, disaster relief Status of Forces Arrangements (SOFAs), planning for ARF's next disaster relief exercise in Indonesia, improving coordination with other regional organizations, advancing ARF's disaster relief work plan, and revising ARF's Strategic Guidance for disaster relief document. Co-chaired by the United States and Thailand, the meeting did see very real progress in a number of areas.

CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

¶2. (U) Co-chaired by the United States and Thailand, delegates from 21 of ARF's 27 countries attended the meeting along with a few regional and international non-governmental organizations. The annual Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM-DR) serves as ARF's policy exchange and working group on DR issues. Delegates included diplomatic officials, civilian national and international relief experts, military planners and policy experts, and NGO representatives. A copy of the Co-Chair's report of the meeting can be found by visiting the State Dept intranet site for ARF matters at <http://eap.state.gov/EAPOffices/RSP/ARF.cfm>.

¶3. (U) DAY ONE: The ISM-DR opened up with remarks from the two co-chairs, EAP Regional and Security Policy Director Henry Jardine and Thai Deputy Director-General of ASEAN Affairs Manasvis Srisodapal. USPACOM Center of Excellence for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs Director LTGEN (Ret) John Goodman delivered a keynote address highlighting the key considerations for civil-military coordination in disaster relief operations involving foreign military forces.

¶4. (U) DAY TWO: Delegates worked in five Discussion Groups focusing on particular disaster relief initiative on ARF's agenda. These Discussion Groups included: 1) planning for the next ARF disaster relief exercise, 2) reviewing the text of ARF's "Model Arrangement" concept, 3) advancing work on ARF's Disaster Relief Work Plan, 4) improving coordination of disaster relief capacity-building efforts

undertaken by regional and international organizations, and 5) reviewing ARF's Strategic Guidance document for disaster relief. Facilitators from across ARF's membership led each of these sessions (see paras 6-10).

15. (U) DAY THREE: Returning to a plenary format, officials from four ARF countries (Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Bangladesh) and representatives from two regional fora (the Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT) and UN's Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs' annual Asia-Pacific Conference on Military Assistance to Disaster Relief Operations (UNOCHA)) delivered presentations offering views on the civil-military coordination challenges of disaster relief operations. In the afternoon session, the discussion groups' facilitators presented their group's outcomes to the plenary, discussed areas of agreement and disagreement, and recommended next steps on each of these initiatives.

STATUS OF ONGOING ARF DISASTER RELIEF INITIATIVES

16. (SBU) EXERCISE PLANNING: Indonesia and Japan, as co-chairs for the next ARF disaster relief exercise, facilitated this Discussion Group and distributed a draft concept paper for their planned, March 2011 exercise. The concept paper included notional plans for a more dynamic and comprehensive exercise compared to the May 2009 ARF exercise in the Philippines. Indonesia and Japan sought input from ARF members on the paper, including from the U.S. and Philippines co-chairs of the previous exercise. The Discussion Group also discussed at length suggestions from ARF members on the exercise

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structure, in part based on lessons learned from the May Philippines exercise. These suggestions centered on:

- the need to test the full range of strategic, operational, and tactical protocols involved in civil-military disaster relief operations
- increasing the role of civilian agencies during the planning and execution of the exercise
- including decision-makers during planning conferences and incorporating lessons learned from the May 2009 exercise
- ensuring site surveys remain an integral part of the planning process

17. (SBU) MODEL ARRANGEMENT: PM/SNA's Security Negotiations and Agreements Senior Advisor Kurt Amend facilitated a session of 30-45 officials from a variety of ARF countries. The Discussion Group conducted an extensive, line-by-line review of the ARF Voluntary Model Arrangement for the Use of Military and Civil Defense Assets (MCDA) in Disaster Relief text. The Model Arrangement text will eventually serve as a common, regional starting point for countries to pursue, on a bilateral basis, temporary Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) for disaster relief operations involving foreign military forces. As the sponsor for the proposal, the United States will circulate a revised version of the text reflecting the Discussion Group's edits, seek further input from ARF members, and continue to advance a revised text through the ARF political process for final endorsement by ARF ministers in the Summer of 2010. The Discussion Group also recommended the Model Arrangement's testing at the planned 2011 exercise.

18. (SBU) Participants identified areas of broad agreement on the ARF Voluntary "Model Arrangement" for the Use of Military and Civil Defense Assets (MCDA) in Disaster Relief such as:

- Importance of the Model Arrangement as a mechanism for reducing response time
- Respect for sovereignty of Affected and Assisting States
- Mutually agreed nature of MCDA activities.
- Peaceful nature of MCDA activities.
- General applicability of Oslo Guidelines (with some concerns expressed).
- Importance of uniform terminology and common understanding.

19. (SBU) However, a number of areas remain sensitive for some ARF

countries including:

- Scope of applicability (natural vs. manmade disasters)
- Command & control over MCDA operations
- Criminal jurisdiction (shared vs. exclusive), custody, detention, and dispute resolution
- Individual member-nation concerns (e.g., quarantine, licensing, sovereign immunity of vessels & aircraft, limitations due to internal laws)
- Carrying of arms by MCDA members
- Adjudication and resolution of claims

¶10. (SBU) STRATEGIC GUIDANCE FOR HADR: Australian Wing Commander Antony Martin facilitated a discussion on the ARF Strategic Guidance for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) text. Thailand was particularly interested in the Strategic Guidance's timeline for assisting ARF nations, such as how long after an event assistance should shift from search and rescue to emergency relief to recovery efforts. Participants agreed to provide further written comments by the end of October and move the document through ARF's political process for Ministerial endorsement in Summer 2010. Key changes to the document include:

- Removing the Virtual Task Force Model to keep the document at the strategic level
- Updating terminology to remain consistent with other internationally recognized documents and guidelines
- Reflecting recent initiatives such as the ARF Model Arrangement and ARF Disaster Relief Mapping Service initiatives.

¶11. (SBU) DISASTER RELIEF WORK PLAN: Thailand and the ASEAN Secretariat co-facilitated a session designed to jumpstart ARF's disaster relief Work Plan. Progress on the Work Plan has been slow due to a lack of interest from ARF countries to serve as the ASEAN and non-ASEAN Lead Countries in ARF's three priority areas: disaster risk reduction, emergency response, and improving regional coordination of capacity-building efforts. ASEAN announced it would nominate three ASEAN countries to serve in that role following a late- October ASEAN business meeting. Australia agreed to lead disaster risk reduction efforts. Other recommendations included refining the Work Plan's structure, monitoring its progress, and modifications to a few existing projects. The Work Plan will be revised accordingly and project ideas can be submitted by ARF countries.

¶12. (SBU) COORDINATION OF REGIONAL EFFORTS: This Discussion Group,
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facilitated by an Australian disaster relief official, shared information regarding the core strategies and activities of Asia-Pacific regional and international organizations involved in disaster relief capacity-building efforts. The Discussion Group gained consensus on pursuing an active role for ARF in working with these regional organizations like Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD), and other fora (including ASEAN itself). ARF's efforts could improve regional coordination to avoid duplication of effort and to identify these institutions' strengths and weakness in this crowded field of cooperation.

¶13. (U) POC: POC for this report and further questions/comments on ARF's work is EAP/RSP Kevin Sheives (sheiveskw@state.gov, 202-647-1217). You can also visit the State Department Intranet Site for ARF at <http://eap.state.gov/EAPOffices/RSP/ARF.cfm>.

¶14. (SBU) COMMENT: Disaster relief continues to serve as ARF's most successful area of work. ARF leverages its inclusive membership, involvement of military forces, and growing expertise to build interoperability among ARF members for major, multinational relief operations in response to regional disasters. The approach of working in small groups on specific issues was helpful for moving discussions forward. This format was a first for ARF which prefers a slower, more inclusive process for discussion. In a positive sign of ARF's increasing relevance for regional disaster management, progress was made on defining areas of general consensus on the Model Agreement, next steps for the training exercise in Indonesia, and for

coordination of regional efforts.
CLINTON